Hannah Kass

Congregation B’nai Jeshurun

Kitah Zayin (7th grade)

NARRATIVE:

Since my class is working with the Facing History & Ourselves organization’s curriculum entitled “Holocaust and Human Behavior,” I am using the design principle of applying Torah to daily life in a slightly different way. We are discussing Jewish values and bringing in material from the Torah this year, but we are much more focused on Jewish history and the moral values that we can understand in relation to the Holocaust. Therefore, it has been more important to me to have my students figure out how to apply the moral teachings of our history to their daily lives, as that is central to the Facing History curriculum.

In this lesson, we discussed the Nuremberg trials. Students read brief biographies (on handouts) about three different Nazis, but only one of those men was actually tried at Nuremberg. His name was Julius Streicher, and he was a major publisher of Nazi propaganda newspapers and books. The second figure was Alfons Heck, a young member and leader in the Hitler Youth movement. The third was a man named Kurt Pruefer, an engineer who helped design and repair the crematoria at Auschwitz. Students were assigned roles in our “Nuremberg Mock Trial,” and we tried each of these Nazi participants on four counts (which the students as a class established, and which resembled the four counts used at the actual Nuremberg trials): crimes against humanity (i.e. torture, rape, child abuse, etc.); conspiracy; religious persecution and prejudice; and genocide.

My noticing tool for this class has been **journaling**, and in their roles in each trial, my students were asked to record their opinions and questions regarding the biographical material for each Nazi. (If a student was playing the defendant, for example, he/she needed to write down his/her own defense, and so on.) This written assignment served as preparation for the trials, which we then held in our classroom.